

Human Rights Commission
City of Morgantown
Morgantown WV 26505

Minutes of the January 17, 2013 Meeting

Meeting called to order: 6:24 p.m.

Present: Don Spencer, Chair; John Hagan, Vice Chair; Marlene Robinson-Savino, Secretary; Members -- Mike Fike, Warren Harger, Anne Marie Lofaso, Jan Derry (who was unable to stay); Dave Bott -- city representative; and guests -- Tim Hairston Human Rights Commission of West Virginia board member and Paul Sheridan, Attorney General's office in place of Judge Carter.

Minutes: December 20, 2012 not available for review and approval.

Review of Ordinance and Orientation and Training: Paul Sheridan went over the origin of state's Human Rights Act and the states Human Rights Commission responsibilities. Tim Hairston provided the attendees with a handout that included the details that Paul Sheridan expressed. This handout would have been presented by Judge Carter had she been able to attend. John Hagan requested a power point of the handout for the Morgantown Commission's future use. Paul Sheridan discussed federal monies in relation to Human Rights Act and gave a tour of how the state commission works.

Warren Harger asked if the city commission can bring issues to state commission and can city commission bring complaintants to the state commission. Discussion followed.

It was explained that there authorities Morgantown's commission do not have at this time. The Morgantown commission can help a complaintant to complete forms and be supportive in the filing process. Anne Marie Lofaso shared that the WVU law school has a Human Rights Immigration Clinic that might be helpful in filling out forms with complaintants to be submitted to the state commission. She will investigate possibility.

It was explained that the state commission processes cases involving discrimination in employment, public accommodation, and housing primarily.

Discussion was presented by Dave Bott as a result of a question from Jan Derry regarding testing of housing discrimination. If landlords are discriminating would this be a conflict with her responsibility and her being on the city commission. Don Spencer stated that the Morgantown commission want to deal with issues up front to prevent conflicts. The commission's credibility will come in the "endorsement of the right to have an investigation". Discussion continued on the need for education and understanding of laws for all citizens. The importance of education and understanding will have a profound impact on the community. People need to be aware of Human Rights Commission and the mechanism for grievances involving human rights issues.

The question of maximum benefit to complaintant when case is found in favor of complaintant was asked by Don Spencer. Paul Sheridan spoke to verdict awards.

Budget: A written report from the Budget Committee meeting held on January 4 was presented. Motion presented by Anne Marie Lofaso requested that letters be prepared to accompany the city's Commission requests for city and CDBG funding that will include brief explanations of the use for the funding. The motion was seconded by John Hagan and passed unanimously. Don Spencer volunteered to make the first draft of the letters which could be reviewed by the Commission. Concensus was given by members present for Don Spencer to prepare both letters.

Bylaws: Don Spencer volunteered to prepare a first draft of the bylaws for the next meeting with the understanding that Commission members would red line the draft and discuss changes at a Commission meeting. Thereafter the draft might be reviewed by Tim Hairston, Paul Sheridan and possibly Anne Marie Lofaso's contacts at the Law school – if she so recommends.

Inasmuch as the bylaws will include basic operational procedures for the Commission and ultimately require City Council approval, having multiple reviews may be in the Commission's best interests.

Commissioner Reports:

Marlene Robinson -- no report;

Mike Fike -- has decided to seek nomination for city council for the 6th ward;

Warren Harger -- pointed out that there should be a line item on all city contracts that include statement re: inclusive city;

Anne Marie Lofaso -- will look into whether we can partner with the law school on various matters;

John Hagan -- thanked our guests Tim Hairston and Paul Hairston for their presentation and guidance current and future. Upcoming will be Civil Rights Day sponsored by the state commission on February 22. this may be an opportunity to partner with the state. Tim Hairston may be the appropriate person to make appropriate contact re: Civil Right's Day.

Next Committee Meeting: February 21, 2013

Meeting adjourned 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Robinson
Commission Secretary